A LESS TRAVELED PATH:

SADDHARMASMṚTYUPASTHĀNASŪTRA CHAPTER 2

CRITICALLY EDITED WITH

A STUDY ON ITS STRUCTURE AND SIGNIFICANCE

FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF BUDDHIST MEDITATION

VOLUME I

BY

DANIEL M. STUART

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A Study on Its Structure and Significance for the Development of Buddhist Meditation

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Daniel M. Stuart

Volume I

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To the Ancestors

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INTRODUCTION

This book is a study of a text, a practice, and an ideology. In it I explore a particular moment in the history of the Indian Buddhist tradition through the lens of a single text, the *Saddharmasmṛty-upasthānasūtra* (hereafter *Saddhsu*). A remnant of a textual tradition that seems closely connected to meditative practices on the ground, but also presents evidence of participation in a budding philosophical tradition, this text is an informative transitional witness to a number of developments in Indian Buddhism during the first half of the first millennium of the Common Era—what has come to be called the "middle period" of Indian Buddhism. It fills a historical gap between the somewhat obscure early Buddhist canonical literature[1] and the elaborate speculations or doxographical proofs of classical exegetical sources. In interweaving descriptions of meditative practice, literary figurations, rhetoric, and philosophical queries, it reveals a vivid and multilayered vista of a little-known sphere of Indian religious life. A manuscript of this voluminous text in its original Sanskrit was only recently discovered.[2] In this study, I critically edit and translate its second chapter to examine the intricacies of a unique Indian Buddhist contemplative tradition that developed during the first four centuries CE.

Despite recent scholarly critiques of textually oriented studies of Buddhism,[3] historians and scholars of religion still remain largely dependent on textual works, preserved in various languages, without which the landscape of ancient Indian Buddhism would appear as a desolate wasteland. While attempts to glean data from archaeological, epigraphic, and art historical evidence have offered valuable insights, they have not replaced the need for close textual studies. Almost all of the major recent advances in understanding the history of Indian Buddhism come to us through the study of texts, the discovery of new textual sources, or the contextualization of art and archeological data in relationship to or against textual materials. The present study of the *Saddhsu* is first and foremost a study of a text, a

---

[1] The concept of canon in the Buddhist context is fraught with problems, as various schools of Buddhism have very different ideas about what might constitute a canon. I employ the term "canonical" here to refer to the foundational textual traditions of the Āgamas, Nikāyas, and Vinaya texts, which served as central foundational referents for all of the early Buddhist schools, and were transmitted in various permutations in different regions, and in different languages and dialects.

[2] Luo Zhao identified this manuscript among the manuscripts at Norbulingka in Lhasa. A copy of this manuscript is also kept in the collection of the China Tibetology Research Center (Box 12, No.1). I received this information in a private communication from Professor Ernst Steinkellner.

[3] SCHOPEN 1991.

historical engagement with a literary form that must be read within the context of a protracted and complex development of Indian literary tradition.

Indian Buddhist literature consists of various types of material. It is a matrix of oral teachings, recitations, narratives, poems, and treatises that intermingle within many different transmission traditions. The *Saddhsu* stands out within this matrix because it is situated between the revelatory, narrative, and regulatory canonical literature of the Buddhist tradition *(dharmavinaya)*—originally transmitted in an entirely oral literary context—and the fully developed scholastic literature, which is a decidedly written enterprise.[4] The text was produced between the second and fourth centuries CE,[5] at a time when newly evolving forms of Buddhist literature were coming into their own, as evidenced by the production of new and creative texts—best exemplified by Mahāyāna *sūtra*-s—and a growing field of scholastic literary production. In these texts, traditional Buddhist teachings and categories are reformed, transvalued, and transposed within a dynamic field of literary and doctrinal contestation. The *Saddhsu* incorporates elements drawn directly from the canonical *sūtra* literature of the early Buddhist tradition, as well as cosmological narratives, didactic poetry, and philosophical queries, the synthesis of which is characteristic of these later, more developed layers of Buddhist literature. It stands at the threshold between an older, more traditional framework of scholastic categories, and new and evolving doctrinal and philosophical concepts.

At the same time, the *Saddhsu* is also significant because it preserves a unique tradition of meditation hitherto largely unexplored by modern scholarship. This tradition develops organically from an ancient canonical representation of Buddhist meditation—the practice of distinguishing the six elements *(ṣaḍdhātu)* of human psychophysical life. The authors/compilers/redactors of the *Saddhsu*

[4] Here I use the word 'scholastic' in a rather narrow sense, to refer to textual traditions devoted to comprehensive exegetical analyses of Buddhist doctrines, practices, and textual traditions. More broadly, one can see a large swath of Buddhist didactic literary productions—both oral and written—as forms of scholasticism. However, the practice of producing comprehensive analytical treatises *(śāstra)*, which began in earnest around the first century CE, marks an important historical development in India. Tied to the development of writing, and often involving citation and cross-reference, this mode of literary production became central to a wide range of religious and secular literary traditions. I refer to the production of such treatises as scholasticism proper.

[5] See Chapter 1, pp. 43–45 for a more detailed dating of the text.

expand upon this representation to outline a broadly figured framework of mental cultivation, one that is integrally tied to ethical practices and embedded in an elaborate cosmography. Positioned as it is historically, and standing apart from the mainstream of Buddhist scholastic literature, the *Saddhsu* provides scholars with a new lens through which to envision middle period Indian Buddhist meditation practice.

The practices represented in the text moreover construct, and are reinforced by, an ideology of cosmic power, one that ties ethical conduct, contemplative knowledge and scholasticism to a spiritual goal of selfless cosmic sovereignty. This ideology reflects the convergence of the ascetic, the literary, the philosophical, and the cosmographical in the meditative practices of individual practitioners. The soteriology of the *Saddhsu* allows scholars a glimpse of a shifting field of religious discourse, as the text documents a dynamic tension between a foundational Buddhist ethic of spiritual relinquishment and an emergent ethic of individual spiritual power. We thus see a singular meditation practice at the center of a soteriological power play, presented within a vast landscape of spiritual possibility. Text, practice, and power uncloak themselves in collusion, revealing an unprecedented world of spiritual thought, action, and experience.

In this study, I present the reader with an interpretation of the *Saddhsu*, focusing particularly on its second chapter, the most archaic layer of the text. I argue that the text presents early evidence for an important set of historical developments within Indian Buddhism, developments that reveal continuity with the early Buddhist tradition, instantiate a number of transitional conceptions of the Buddhist path of practice, and prefigure a philosophical and soteriological shift in Buddhist thought that flowered in the early medieval period. I demonstrate how the text's presentation of a path of practice is incorporated into a comprehensive vision of the Indian cosmos, and a clearly defined framework of ethical practice, presented as a theory of cause and effect, action (karma) and result *(phala)*. By the time the *Saddhsu* was composed, something of an obsession with karma theory had developed within Indian Buddhism, and the entire text, and its vision of the world, is shot through with this concern.

This interest in karma theory is accompanied by a preoccupation with the workings of the mind, and the way the mind constructs human experience. In the *Saddhsu*, this issue gets worked out in a description of a regime of meditative practice, suggesting that such

issues emerged within the context of engagement with such a regime. I thus show how the philosophical preoccupation with building a model of mental activity connects with spiritual cultivation to reveal an emergent mind-centered epistemology. This epistemology depicts the world of experience as fundamentally a production of the mind, a representation produced in the mind. In so doing, it raises questions about the very existence of the external sense objects experienced by the mind, but does not yet fully or explicitly deny the existence of the external world, as the philosophical school of the Yogācāra-vijñānavāda went on to do.[6] Engaging with traditional Buddhist philosophical categories, the authors/compilers/redactors of the *Saddhsu* were in a struggle for understanding, working out a provisional ontology, which allowed for new philosophical questions to colonize traditional Buddhist frameworks of thought and practice. The text gives readers a glimpse of this process.

I additionally demonstrate that these philosophical and practical developments were part of an expanding Buddhist soteriology, steeped in ascetic values, centered on the figure of the *yogācāra* or meditation practitioner, and influenced by a developing conception of bodhisattva practice. The protracted path of practice represented in the *Saddhsu* may in fact be an example of a veiled attempt to map bodhisattva practice while keeping within the basic frameworks of traditional Buddhist scholastic categories. Though the *Saddhsu* does not explicitly profess a Mahāyāna ideology, it nonetheless surreptitiously partakes in many of the attitudes that came to characterize Mahāyāna Buddhism in the first four centuries CE, and its path of practice pushes beyond traditional mainstream Buddhist path models. Further, I show that certain aspects of the practice represented in the *Saddhsu* eventually came to be understood, within certain traditions, as constitutive aspects of bodhisattva practice, but that some Mahāyānists explicitly disavowed such practices. In this way, the content of the *Saddhsu* can be best understood as representing a

[6] Due to the idiosyncrasies of the text, and the general distrust I have of attempts to understand specific traditions through the lens of doxography, I do not devote serious attention to sorting out the philosophical school affiliation of the *Saddhsu*. It is probably appropriate, however, to mention that a number of philosophical concepts in the text seem to correlate with a putative "Sautrāntika" position. Thus, the text may be one of the few historical documents extant that presents an actual work of masters connected to the somewhat elusive Sautrāntika school, if such a thing ever truly existed. On the Sautrāntikas, see KRITZER 2003. On the possibility of an anti-realist Sautrāntika position, see PARK 2014.

quiet voice in a developing dispute over what constituted Mahāyāna Buddhist practice.

In the following chapters, I draw out these concepts, presenting the broad contours of the *Saddhsu* as a text, analyzing the details of its program of meditation, outlining its soteriological agenda, and discussing its ideology in the context of the history of Buddhist ideas.

RELEVANT PRIOR SCHOLARSHIP ON BUDDHIST MEDITATION IN INDIA

> … One who wants to take a particular meditation subject should take it from someone with fluxes destroyed, who has, by means of that particular meditation subject, produced the fourfold or fivefold absorption and reached the destruction of the fluxes by developing insight that has absorption as its proximate cause …
>
> If someone with fluxes destroyed is available, that is good. If not, then one should take the [meditation subject] from a non-returner, a once-returner, a stream-enterer, a worldling who has attained absorption, one who knows three Piṭakas, one who knows two Piṭakas, one who knows one Piṭaka, in descending order [as available] …
>
> Now, those beginning with one whose fluxes are destroyed, mentioned above, will describe only the path they have themselves realized. But with a learned man, his instructions and his answers to questions are purified by his having approached various teachers, and so he will explain a meditation subject showing a wide path *(mahāmagga)*, like a great elephant in the jungle, selecting discourses and examples, enjoining what is useful and [prohibiting] what is not useful.
>
> *Visuddhimagga*, 3. *Kammaṭṭhānaggahaṇaniddeso*, 42[7]

The above quote from the *Path of Purification*, a seminal Pāli text on Buddhist meditation, makes clear the fundamental and long-standing connection between meditative attainment, the teaching of the Dharma, and the role of textual learning within the Buddhist

[7] My translation is adapted from ÑĀṆAMOLI 1999 [1956], p. 99. Vism 98–99 (B^{e}): *… yaṃ kammaṭṭhānaṃ gahetukāmo hoti, tass' eva vasena catukkapañcakajjhānāni nibbattetvā jhānapadaṭṭhānaṃ vipassanaṃ vaḍḍhetvā āsavakkhayappattassa khīṇāsavassa santike gahetabbaṃ … sace khīṇāsavaṃ labhati, icc etaṃ kusalaṃ. no ce labhati, anāgāmisakadāgāmisotāpannajhānalābhīputhujjanatipiṭakadharadvipiṭakadharaekapiṭakadharesu purimassa purimassa santike … pubbe vuttakhīṇāsavādayo cettha attanā adhigatamaggam eva ācikkhanti. bahussuto pana taṃ taṃ ācariyaṃ upasaṅkamitvā uggahaparipucchānaṃ visodhitattā ito cito ca suttañ ca kāraṇañ ca sallakkhetvā sappāyāsappāyaṃ yojetvā gahanaṭṭhāne gacchanto mahāhatthī viya mahāmaggaṃ dassento kammaṭṭhānaṃ kathessati.*

tradition. This is something that all scholars of Buddhism now take for granted. Further, training in Buddhist meditation is now commonly accessible throughout the Western world. It is remarkable to realize that little over one hundred years ago the conception of a concrete regime of Buddhist meditation practice in the West was hardly an inkling of an idea in the minds of a few eccentric spiritualists and several interested scholars. As early as 1896, referring to his edition of *A Yogāvacara's Manual of Indian Mysticism as Practiced by Buddhists,* T.W. Rhys Davids commented: "We have no other works in Buddhist literature, either in Pali or Sanskrit, devoted to the details of Jhāna or Samādhi."[8] His words evidence that, at the end of the nineteenth century, western scholars knew next to nothing about the details of Buddhist meditation traditions.[9]

During the late nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth century, scholars of Buddhism principally devoted their attention to simply unearthing and accounting for the massive and diverse range of sources, in various countries and languages, available to modern scholarship. In the years that followed Rhys Davids' foundational work on the Sri Lankan Pāli tradition, vast amounts of material—texts, art, archaeological and numismatic discoveries—were excavated from India's hoary antiquity, making previously uncharted religious worlds more accessible to scholars. As part of this process, a great number of works dealing with Buddhist meditation came to light, and the doctrines of Buddhism came to be properly contextualized within their original Indian ascetic milieu.[10] The work of the Belgian scholar Louis de La Vallée

[8] RHYS DAVIDS, T.W. 1896, pp. vi–vii.

[9] It should be noted that in his masterful 1844 *Introduction à l'histoire du buddhisme indien*, Eugene Burnouf, who, in addition to his work on the Sanskrit sources from Nepal, was also a consummate student of the Pāli Buddhist tradition, gives almost no attention to the subject of meditation or Buddhist spiritual practice. While Heinrich Kern (1882, pp. 467–536) gave more attention to the topic of meditation in his *Buddhismus und seine Geschichte in Indien*, he built his conception of Buddhist meditation largely on comparisons with the *yoga* tradition of Patañjali, and did not devote serious energy to understanding the systems of Buddhist meditation on its own terms. (This is a trend that continued among many European scholars for a number of years). It is not until Louis de la Vallée Poussin's pioneering studies were published that we see a serious attempt to understand the intricacies and problematics of Buddhist meditation, as an early tradition of ascetic practices and as a developed system that is a constitutive aspect of Buddhist doctrinal history. (This was perhaps initiated by his 1898 *Bouddhisme—études et matériaux* [see particularly pp. 82–100].)

[10] A representative sample of materials relevant to the study of Buddhist meditation traditions, which were first edited or studied during the first half of the twentieth

Poussin was perhaps most instrumental in this process, first in making available a large number of materials that informed the study of Indian Buddhist meditation traditions, and secondly in exploring the historical implications of the diversity of Buddhist meditative techniques. In his 1937 article, "Musīla et Nārada: le chemin du Nirvāṇa," La Vallée Poussin identified a tension in early Buddhist *sūtra*-s between two models of the path of practice: one that gives primacy to ecstatic meditative states, and another that emphasizes cognitive understanding regarding the true nature of reality.[11] While the tension imagined by La Vallée Poussin may have been a red herring, his work nonetheless inaugurated a protracted scholastic engagement with the subject of Buddhist meditation techniques, and their relationship to the experience of reality or truth, as well as their connection to the doctrinal edifices of Buddhism.[12] La Vallée Poussin's work outlined the contours of the diverse visions of Buddhist meditation that are presented in the earliest sources available to scholars, and set the stage for a number of further studies.[13]

La Vallée Poussin's interests—like those of most Buddhologists of his day—lay primarily in the field of Buddhist doctrinal history, and were heavily focused on philological analyses of philosophical texts. In contrast, Mircea Eliade's famous *Yoga: essai sur les origines de la mystique indienne*, published in the year just prior to

century, might be presented by the following list of publications: LA VALLÉE POUSSIN 1898, 1907, 1909, 1923–26, 1925, 1930b 1930c, 1930d, 1931, 1936–7a and 1936–37b; BENDALL 1897–1902; SENART 1900; TAYLOR 1905; ÑĀṆATILOKA 1906; WOODWARD 1916; Magdalene and Wilhelm GEIGER 1920; RHYS DAVIDS, C. A. F. 1920–21 (TIN trans. 1922–31), 1927 and 1933; PRZYLUSKI and LAMOTTE 1932; WOGIHARA 1936; DUTT 1934 and 1939–1959; LAMOTTE 1944 and 1949; DEMIÉVILLE 1929–1937; LIN and DEMIÉVILLE 1949.

[11] LA VALLÉE POUSSIN 1936–37a. This article followed upon a number of earlier works in the first decades of the twentieth century, in which La Vallée Poussin explored the doctrinal history of Buddhism. See, for example, LA VALLÉE POUSSIN 1909.

[12] For an apt rebuttal to La Vallée Poussin's delineation of the cognitive and the mystical (as represented by Musīla and Nārada), see BODHI 2003. I have also dealt with this issue myself, from a slightly different angle (see STUART 2013). In two important unpublished papers, Rupert Gethin has also provided a strong argument—drawing on a broad reading of the canonical literature—against the historicist attempt to bifurcate and stratify early Buddhist meditative techniques (see GETHIN 2008 and 2014). Problems remain on all sides of this debate, and one can simply say that the early Buddhist texts present a plethora of obscurities, which make them all the more interesting to read and think about.

[13] La Vallée Poussin's work was also instrumental in contextualizing Buddhist practice within the larger field of Indian *yoga* traditions. See, for example, his article on "Le bouddhisme et le yoga de Patañjali" (1936–37b).

that of La Vallée Poussin's article, brought the spiritual practices of India onto a wider stage.[14] While others had studied India's mystical traditions, Eliade's book, including its chapter on "*Yoga* Techniques in Buddhism," captured both the popular and the scholastic imagination, inaugurating an illustrious trend in the study of the history of religions.[15] With his book, Eliade brought Indian meditation traditions to the center of a dialogue on comparative religion, positing a primeval Indian spirituality as a stark example of a universal religious urge.

The study of Buddhist meditation traditions since the time of La Vallée Poussin and Eliade can be seen as an outgrowth of their two scholarly approaches and a continuation of the tension between them. Buddhologists continued to bring out more and more relevant material for the study of Buddhist contemplative traditions, while the field of comparative mysticism has become a veritable cottage industry among scholars of religious studies.[16]

Rooted in this historical soil, a thick forest of scholarship on Buddhist contemplative traditions has grown up in the second half of the twentieth century. Here I will only be able to sketch the rough contours of the most influential trends in such scholarship, and those works directly relevant to the present study.[17] Since this study deals with Buddhism in India through the first 800 years of its history, I will also only deal with studies relevant to that time frame.

After the work of La Vallée Poussin, the first scholastic landmark that stands out is the work of Lin Li-kouang, who studied the Chinese translation of the *Saddhsu* in the 1930s and 1940s, but died prematurely so that his unfinished study did not appear in print until 1949. While Lin's work was primarily devoted to the history of Buddhist doctrine, it engaged tangentially with the topic of Buddhist

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[14] ELIADE 1936.

[15] ELIADE 1936, pp. 166–198.

[16] A good example of this mystical urge within the field of Buddhist studies is the self-proclaimed "modern gnostic" Edward Conze, whose work on Buddhist meditation traditions and the Prajñāpāramitā corpus of literature was foundational to the modern enterprise of Buddhist Studies (see, for example, CONZE 1956 and 1962).

While the present study is more of a Buddhological work than it is a study of mysticism, it nonetheless defies such facile categorizations, allowing for the sometimes uncomfortable complicity of the Buddhologist and the serious student of mysticism.

[17] Here I also must admit that, due to my ignorance of the Japanese language, I am unable to include the ample scholarship in Japanese on the subject of middle period Buddhist meditation traditions.

meditation.[18] Lin also exposed a whole milieu of early meditation practitioners *(yogācāra)*, and a genre of textual sources—texts on the stages of meditation practice *(yogācārabhūmi)*—produced by communities of such practitioners in the northwest of India. While Lin perhaps underemphasized the role of meditation in the construction of the *Saddhsu*, he nonetheless brought many of the text's details to light. It is the shortcoming of scholars who came after him that they paid very little attention to his work, and to the *Saddhsu* in general.[19]

Paul Demiéville, a close colleague of Lin, perhaps made the single most important contribution to deepening the understanding of the history of middle period Indian Buddhist meditation traditions. Demiéville's 1954 study, "La *Yogācārabhūmi* de Saṅgharakṣa," brought to light a meditation text from northwestern India, produced during the early centuries of the Common Era, and a number of systems of practice developed in similar texts. He built on Lin's work to reveal the rough outlines of several different textual traditions oriented around the practice of meditation, traditions connected with the cult of the bodhisattva Maitreya and active during first half of the first millennium CE.[20] Demiéville also raised scholastic awareness about the importance of the now famous *Yogācārabhūmiśāstra* for an understanding of the history of Buddhist meditation in general.[21] Demiéville's work was an important early call to study middle period cults of Buddhist meditation practitioners.

In another scholastic trajectory of the 1960s and 70s, Lambert Schmithausen devoted substantial energy to studying both the earliest traditions of Buddhist meditation as preserved in Buddhist canonical texts and the role of meditation in the development of specific philosophical schools, in particular the Yogācāra-vijñānavāda school. Further, in opening up the dense and difficult *Yogācārabhūmiśāstra* to serious study, Schmithausen's work was instrumental in exposing a lost aspect of the history of middle period

[18] See particularly LIN and DEMIÉVILLE 1949, pp. 118–127

[19] One notable exception is Cristina Scherrer-Schaub's 2009 article, in which she explores the *Saddhsu*'s descriptions of painting practices and provides a general discussion of the framework of the text. She also notes the important connection between the practice of painting and the practice of meditation (see SCHERRER-SCHAUB 2009, P. 33).

[20] DEMIÉVILLE 1954, pp. 376–395.

[21] DEMIÉVILLE 1954, pp. 339–340.

Indian Buddhism.[22] By stratifying the text historically, and showing its emphasis on specific meditation techniques, he tied the rarified scholastic developments of one of the most influential schools of Buddhist philosophical thought to techniques of meditation that emerged from the early Buddhist tradition. Schmithausen's wide-ranging work influenced a whole generation of scholars to think critically about Buddhist texts and to take meditative experience seriously as a dominant factor in the history of Buddhist thought.[23]

Schmithausen's works, and those of his students, have profoundly enhanced modern scholarly understanding of the theoretical and historical aspects of representations of Indian Buddhist meditation practices. Notable examples of such work are the studies of Alexander von Rospatt (1995) and Mudagamuwe Maithrimurthi (1999), who both provide rich treatments of how conceptions of Buddhist meditation practice were elemental in the development of Buddhist thought systems. At the same time, Schmithausen's focus on first establishing a putative "authentic" early tradition of meditation, and secondly tracing the development of meditation practice through the history of ideas—primarily employing heavily redacted scholastic philosophical texts—has led to something of a binary and teleological mode of framing and analyzing the diverse models of practice that are represented in the historical record.[24] A given model of meditation, cultivation, or liberation thus comes to be interpreted as either a corruption of an earlier authentic practice, or a steppingstone towards a fully developed scholastic or "philosophical" model of practice, with an implicit set of value judgments privileging more sophisticated

[22] The editing work of the Indian scholar Vidhushekhara Bhattacharya (1957) set the stage for Schmithausen's work. Alex Wayman, an American scholar, should also be credited with helping to bring the *Yogācārabhūmiśāstra*—particularly its most archaic section, the *Śrāvakabhūmi*—to a wider audience. See WAYMAN 1961.

[23] See, in particular, SCHMITHAUSEN 1969, 1973, 1976a, 1976b, 1976c, 1981, 1982, 1987, and 2014. The work of many of Schmithausen's students has perpetuated his careful scholastic approach to the study of Buddhist meditation. See, for example, VON ROSPATT 1995 and 2013; MAITHRIMURTHI 1999; DELEANU 1992, 1993, 1997, 2000, 2006, 2012, forthcoming-a, and forthcoming-b. Of particular importance for the development of a better understanding of the foundational meditative practices presented in the well-known *Yogācārabhūmiśāstra* are DELHEY 2006 and 2009, as well as SUGAWARA forthcoming.

[24] Most representative of these two approaches are SCHMITHAUSEN 1976a and SCHMITHAUSEN 2007.

developments of doctrine.[25] This binary model of interpretation, exemplified in Schmithausen's scholarship, has been a powerful structural force in the history of Buddhist Studies.

Since the 1980s, a plethora of studies have greatly expanded and nuanced the western scholastic understanding of Buddhist meditation traditions, clarifying terms, concepts, and the historical frameworks within which Buddhist teachings were transmitted. Notable in this regard is the work of Tilmann Vetter (1988), Johannes Bronkhorst (1986, 1993 and 2009), Bhikkhu Anālayo (2003), Alexander Wynne (2007) and Tse-fu Kuan (2008), all of whom attempted to discern the earliest Buddhist teachings on meditation through the text-historical method, giving great importance to canonical sources preserved in Pāli.[26] They each come to different conclusions, however, and this diversity of opinions is representative of the state of the field today. In a less historicist vein, yet not abandoning the project of understanding Buddhist meditation in history, Lance Cousins (1973, 1984 and 1996) and Rupert Gethin (1992) look more broadly at the meditative practices preserved within the Theravāda tradition.[27] Unlike Vetter, Bronkhorst, and Wynne, Cousins and Gethin engage the Theravāda textual tradition as a coherent whole, a set of ideas and practices that has many historical layers to it, but can be discerned most clearly through the commentarial traditions that have primarily structured traditional Theravāda understandings

[25] This binary approach to the history of Buddhism is pervasive in the scholastic record. For a rather prescient example of an approach that creates a slightly different problematic binary, presenting a specific philosophical model as a renewal of a putative authentic early practice, see GÓMEZ 1976. For a clear instance of the doctrinalization of Buddhist practice traditions, see GÓMEZ 1983 and 1987. Gómez, like Schmithausen in Europe, has been an important figure in the recent history of Buddhist Studies in America. For an incisive critique of the modern scholarly emphasis on Buddhist "doctrine" and a call for a return to an understanding of early Buddhism as a philosophy of life in line with Hadot's conception of philosophy, see SHULMAN 2014.

[26] I have also participated in this approach to the study of the early tradition (see STUART 2013).

[27] Tse-fu Kuan's approach is perhaps the most nuanced of the scholars represented here, simply because he broadly accesses the early Āgama material extant only in Chinese translation. We might also add Richard Gombrich (1997) to this scholastic trajectory, although his methodology fluctuates between the Pāli traditionalist approach and the more historicist text-critical approach. ZAFIROPULO 1993 and WEN 2009 should also be included. Of the scholars mentioned, Bhikkhu Anālayo's more recent work is perhaps the best informed, since he has gone on to catalogue rather exhaustively the extant *āgama/nikāya* literature in the various languages in which it is extant. See, for example, ANĀLAYO 2009, 2010 and 2011a. Anālayo's work gives scholars a much better sense of the diversity of the early materials.

of meditation. While the work of these scholars is certainly more faithful to an actual lived tradition of meditative practice than that of the aforementioned scholars—whose conceptions are basically imagined reconstructions of a putative earliest (set of) practice(s)—the homogenizing force of the Theravāda commentarial project tends to drown out the voices of the individual meditative traditions that most likely made up a very colorful fabric of religious practice during the first half of the first millennium in India, Sri Lanka, and elsewhere.[28]

An additional and significant development in the study of the history of Buddhist meditation traditions is the work of Paul Harrison, who recently (1995a and 2003) brought the subject of meditation to bear on the historical development of Mahāyāna Buddhism. Through a wide reading of early middle Mahāyāna texts—texts composed or redacted roughly between 100 CE and 300 CE—Harrison posited an emphasis on hard-core meditation practice as one fundamental aspect of a core set of values central to the Mahāyāna traditions that produced such texts.[29] While Harrison seldom dwells on the details of the meditative traditions prescribed or practiced by these early communities of practitioners, his work nonetheless opens up an important avenue of inquiry.[30] Like Schmithausen, Harrison places the practice of meditation at the center of important religious developments within the history of Buddhism, instead of marginalizing it in the shadows of purely

[28] The period between 150 CE and 400 CE has been called a time of "crisis of Pāli studies" (VON HINÜBER 1996, p. 126) because there is very little from the scholastic record to draw on. The one possible exception to this is the *Paṭisambhidāmagga*, a mysterious yet influential text whose date is uncertain. Cousins' (1996) work on the influence of this text on the development of a classical Theravāda insight meditation program is perhaps the single most important contribution to an understanding of this dark period of Theravāda meditation history.

[29] On this topic, see also DELEANU 2000. Deleanu's work unfortunately privileges another reificatory dichotomy, that of non-Mahāyāna traditions verses Mahāyāna traditions, when treating the meditation practices he sees as fundamental to the early Mahāyāna. Harrison's work is more nuanced in showing a powerful continuity between, and an overlap in outlook of, the non-Mahāyāna traditions and Mahāyāna traditions. Also relevant to his 2003 article is the work of BRAARVIG 1993 and PAGEL 1995, whose respective studies of the *Akṣayamatinirdeśa* and the *Bodhisattvapiṭaka* reveal the foundational role of mainstream meditation practices, such as the practice of the four *smṛtyupasthāna*-s, in their notions of the bodhisattva path (HARRISON 2003, p. 118, footnote 6).

[30] A useful work by Harrison that does engage in a bit more detail with the specifics of contemplative traditions is a 1992 article on the practice of *buddhānusmṛti* (see HARRISON 1992b).

doctrinal diversions. And yet, because of his historical interests in sorting out a Buddhological problem—the long-problematized issue of the origins of Mahāyāna Buddhism—Harrison does not present a detailed account of the practices presented in the texts upon which he bases his arguments.[31] In many ways, the dichotomizing force of the categories Śrāvakayāna (mainstream or non-Mahāyāna) Buddhism and Mahāyāna Buddhism serves to blot out the details of the regimes of meditative practice developed in Buddhism's middle period precisely because such regimes served as common *loci* for various strands of the Buddhist tradition and are not easily categorized within this dichotomy.[32] Though unable to avoid this issue, Harrison has done the most of anyone in the field to overcome it. His analysis of the role of meditation within the larger social structures of Indian Buddhism, and of the powerful continuities between archaic practices and Mahāyāna practices, is perhaps the most nuanced work available on the topic to date.

As a final scholastic landmark in the field of Buddhist Studies, I would call attention to the works of Florin Deleanu (1992, 1993, 1997, 2003, 2006, 2012 and forthcoming-a) and Yamabe Nobuyoshi (1999, 2009 and 2013), both of whom have studied the details of North Indian meditation traditions preserved in Chinese translation.[33] Their works give serious attention to the specific textual traditions of meditation practitioners in the first half of the first

[31] Such a detailed account is generally lacking in the texts to which Harrison refers, and one must assume a framework of practice chiefly known through recourse to mainstream Buddhist sources. While Harrison (2003, pp. 117–122) asserts that early middle Mahāyāna traditions were drawing on mainstream Buddhist practices, particularly the practice of *smṛtyupasthāna*, the material he then presents from the *Pratyutpannabuddhasaṃmukhāvasthitasamādhi* and the *Larger Sukhāvatīvyūhasūtra* is mostly incidental to what might be considered a real regime of meditation practice.

[32] This problem of categorial stricture is pervasive, as the hermeneutic emphases of the later chapters of the present study will attest. Notions of authenticity, a teleological anticipation of sophisticated doctrinal developments, and the reification of *śrāvakayāna* and Mahāyāna traditions hold scholars of Buddhism, including myself, in their grasp.

[33] The texts most relevant to the present study are T606, the *Yogācārabhūmi of Saṅgharakṣa (Xiuxing daodi jing* 修行道地經), and T618, the *Yogācārabhūmi of Buddhasena* (entitled *Dharmatrāta Dhyānasūtra [Damoduoluo chan jing* 達摩多羅禪經]). The first is dated to some time during the first century of the Common Era, and the second is dated to the end of the fourth century of the Common Era. Both are considered to be from the northwest of India, either Kashmir or Greater Gandhāra. Deleanu's work on the *Śrāvakbhūmi* and Yamabe's work on the *Yogalehrbuch* have also connected these traditions preserved in Chinese translation to literature that is extant in Sanskrit.

millennium CE, and they have made a good start in following up on Demiéville's early attempt to outline the traditions represented by a number of early *yogācārabhūmi* texts.[34] Deleanu's work in particular draws out a range of important details of the meditative traditions preserved in the *Śrāvakabhūmi*, a foundational section of the *Yogācārabhūmiśāstra*. While Deleanu has focused primarily on distinguishing these traditions from their later philosophical counterpart, the Yogācāra-vijñānavāda tradition, Yamabe has primarily examined the ways in which such traditions were elaborated in central Asia and China.

The foregoing survey only partially accounts for the plethora of studies on Buddhist meditation that has been produced over the past 100 years within the academic field of Buddhist Studies. For instance, I have not taken into account non-Buddhological studies on Indian mystical traditions or the burgeoning recent developments in the Buddhism and psychology/science discourse, as these studies are not directly relevant to the historical material I engage here.[35] I focus on the materials presented above because they have all influenced the field of Buddhist Studies, continue to be relevant as the field develops, and form the foundational framework for much of what I am able to do in the pages that follow.

The present study contributes to this protracted scholastic process by presenting in detail the fundamental practices—textual memories, bodily norms, cognitive techniques, ideological structures, and cosmological *mythoi*—of a single tradition of meditation practitioners who lived and practiced between 100 and 400 CE in the northwest of the Indian subcontinent. By editing and translating the core chapter of the *Saddhsu*, available for the first time in its original Sanskrit, I help rescue this tradition from the obscurity of India's fortuitous historical record. While Lin's important early

[34] The scholarship of Noritoshi Aramaki, though mostly written in Japanese and beyond my reach, is also noteworthy. Aramaki is one of a few scholars who have carefully studied the corpus of early *"śrāvakayāna" yogācārabhūmi* texts. His primary agenda in studying such texts, like that of Deleanu, is to connect such traditions with the development of the Yogācāra-vijñānavāda philosophical school. See ARAMAKI 2000.

[35] For a small sampling of publications within this new and fast-growing field of scientific inquiry, which has infiltrated the realms of psychology, cognitive science and neuroscience, see VARELA ET AL. 1991, BAER 2003, KABAT-ZINN 2003, TEASDALE ET AL. 2003, DIMIDJIAN AND LINEHAN 2003, WARREN AND RYAN 2003, BISHOP 2004, CAHN AND POLICH 2006, BRUYA 2010, KABAT-ZINN 2011, SAHDRA ET AL. 2011, MAEX 2011, WALLACE 2003 and 2011, BREWER ET AL. 2011 and 2013, and LINDAHL ET AL. 2014.

contribution to the study of the *Saddhsu*, and its place in Buddhist doctrinal history, was groundbreaking, it was also limited.[36] The present work expands on Lin's study to expose the intricacies of the text in connection with its specific treatments of meditative practice, and to make available the linguistic context in which the tradition was transmitted in India. It returns to fill in the rough outlines sketched by Demiéville, to give more substance to his cogent early suggestions about northwestern *yogācāra* Maitreya cults.[37] It complements the work of Schmithausen and his students by bringing a lesser-known tradition—outside of the scholastic mainstream but perhaps as influential as the early materials preserved in the *Yogācārabhūmiśāstra*—into the broader dialogue on the history of middle period northern Buddhism, as practice, doctrine, and ideology. Finally, it dovetails with the more recent work of Paul Harrison and others on early middle Mahāyāna Buddhism, showing the connection between textual and meditative practices, the emergence of explicit Mahāyāna ideologies, and the colonization of the mainstream of Buddhist thought by such ideologies.

This study shows the vital role of meditation within a regime of practices based on ethical cultivation and culminating in rarified and purificatory modes of discernment. It thus supports the findings of scholars such as Schmithausen and Harrison who place the practice of meditation at the center of their doctrinal and social hermeneutics of the Buddhist tradition during its middle period in India. Yet, it complicates previous scholarship by showing how the details of the tradition preserved in the *Saddhsu* defy or at least challenge the accepted hermeneutic categories within the field of Buddhist Studies. I show that the authors/compilers/redactors of the *Saddhsu* participated in a culture of *sūtra* production prevalent among early-middle Mahāyāna traditions, engaged in the categorial classifications of traditional *ābhidharmika*-s, developed a philosophical trajectory similar to that of the early Yogācāra-vijñānavādins, and gave primary importance to a practice of meditation aimed at mastery of the universe through a very wide application of discernment *(prajñā)*. All of these religio-philosophical elements come together in an elaborately structured composition, the doctrinal thrust of which cannot be separated from its literary construction.

[36] See also DEMOTO 2009.

[37] Another recent useful elaboration of Demiéville's work, attempting to understand specific deployments of the term 'yoga' in early *yogācāra* texts, is SETON 2009.

PROBLEMS OF PERSPECTIVE

Practices of spiritual cultivation have been central to the Buddhist tradition since its inception, and, as the above survey shows, early scholarship on Buddhism gave a good deal of emphasis to interpreting the tradition as a religion chiefly devoted to the cultivation of spiritual techniques of liberation.[38] However, in recent years, scholars of Buddhism have called into question the centrality of contemplative cultivation, instead giving increased attention to the social, political, economic and philosophical aspects of the Buddhist tradition, and downplaying the mystical and experiential components of Buddhist practice. This trend has allowed for an enriched understanding of Buddhism as a (set of) multifaceted religious tradition(s), and has laid open the fact that it cannot be reduced to a simple set of spiritual techniques. However, this shift in emphasis has also engendered a lack of sensitivity to the influence that conceptions and experiences of contemplative cultivation have had on various doctrinal, narrative, political, and practical aspects of Buddhism throughout its history.

This problem is reflected in the work of Gregory Schopen. In a discussion of Sanskrit Buddhist literature dealing with the rules of monastic conduct, Schopen writes:

> Our Code, for example, does refer to ascetic, meditating monks, but when it does so in any detail, such monks almost always appear as the butt of jokes, objects of ridicule, and—not uncommonly—sexual deviants. They are presented as irresponsible and of the type that give the order a bad name. There are texts in our Code where, for example, ascetic, cemetery monks manage only to terrify children; where ascetic monks who wear robes made from cemetery cloth are not even allowed into the monastery, let alone allowed to sit on a mat that belongs to the Community; tales whose only point seems to be to indicate that meditation makes you stupid; texts about monks who meditate in the forest and cannot control their male member and so end up smashing it between two rocks, whereupon the Buddha tells them, while they are howling in pain, that they, unfortunately have smashed the wrong thing—they should have smashed desire …[39]

[38] This fact is perhaps most clearly expressed by Edward Conze when he writes (1967a, p. 213): "The cornerstone of my interpretation of Buddhism is the conviction, shared by nearly everyone, that it is essentially a doctrine of salvation … each and every proposition must be considered in reference to its spiritual intention and as a formulation of meditative experiences."

[39] SCHOPEN 2004, p. 26.

Schopen offers these examples of references to meditation in the *Mūlasarvāstivāda-vinaya* only to dismiss them out of hand, implying that those who compiled the monastic codes were in fact not concerned with meditation.[40] I think this mode of interpretation is problematic. These stories, and numerous other references to meditation in the monastic codes, reveal a certain set of social concerns about meditation that need to be taken seriously.

To make this point more concrete, I would like to highlight one of the examples Schopen presents in the above passage. Citing the story of the great disciple Cūḍapanthaka, Schopen states that his monastic Code contains "tales whose only point seems to be to indicate that meditation makes you stupid." A close analysis of the tale of Cūḍapanthaka, however, reveals that this is a serious misinterpretation.

The story of Cūḍapanthaka is well known, and exists in a number of different versions in various strata of Buddhist literature.[41] All of the stories agree, however, that before he became an arhat, Cūḍapanthaka was a dimwit, unable to memorize even a single verse of the Dharma. The story to which Schopen refers presents a unique take on why he was stupid, one that reveals a number of important social and doctrinal concerns that are directly relevant to concepts of meditation and issues of soteriology.

The narrative presents a group of monks questioning the Buddha as to why Cūḍapanthaka, a great disciple who has become a master of supernormal powers, as well as scripture, was born stupid, unable to remember even a single verse of scripture up until his attainment of arhatship.[42] In response, the Buddha explains that Cūḍapanthaka was born stupid because he 1. was stingy in a past life, when he learned the Dharma from the Buddha Kāśyapa and refused to teach even one verse to anyone else, 2. was then born as a pig dealer and participated in killing pigs, and 3. in the same life as a pig dealer practiced meditation leading to rebirth in the realm of impercipient deities *(asaṃjñisattvadeva)*.[43] The final item on the list is what Schopen alludes to when claiming that the point of this story is to

[40] In a recent book, Schopen's student, Shayne Clarke, perpetuates his teacher's agenda when he quotes the foregoing passage, reiterating that *vinayadhara*-s considered that meditation "makes you stupid" (see CLARKE 2014, p. 17).
[41] See, for example: Th 59; Ap I 58; Vin IV 54; T II 585c4–586c2; T XXIII 794a19–799c13; Ja I 114; Vism 387–389; Dhp-a I 239; Ap-a 317.
[42] COWELL AND NEIL 1987 [1886], p. 504.16–19.
[43] COWELL AND NEIL 1987 [1886], pp. 504.25–505.29.

show that "meditation makes you stupid." In order to assess whether Schopen's claim holds up, let us look more closely at the section of the text describing Cūḍapanthaka's practice of meditation in a past life as a pig dealer:

> The [pig dealer] hog-tied a number of pigs, put them on a boat, and set out. Because those [pigs] were moving about, the boat sunk. There itself, because of this bad conduct, the pig dealer experienced calamity, being submerged by the current. On the bank of the river dwelt 500 solitary buddhas. One of them came to the river for water, and saw him (the pig dealer). He thought: "Is he dead or alive?" Seeing that he (the pig dealer) was still alive, the [solitary buddha] extended his arm[s] like the trunk of an elephant, pulled him (the pig dealer) [from the water], made a beach of sand, and deposited him face down there. Water flowed out of his body. [After some time], he arose and saw footprints. He followed them until he saw the 500 solitary buddhas. He began to serve them with leaves, flowers, fruits, and tooth sticks. They gave him an extra bowl, which he used to eat. Then those solitary buddhas sat cross-legged and meditated. At that time, he also sat cross-legged and meditated in seclusion *(ekānte)*. Having given rise to the impercipient state *(āsaṃjñikam)* there, he was [later] reborn among the impercipient deities … Because he did not teach even a four-line verse [of Dharma] to anyone in one life, because of killing pigs in another, and because of being reborn here [during the time of the Buddha Gautama] from the realm of impercipient beings, the monk Panthaka was subpar *(cūḍa)*, supremely subpar, stupid *(dhanva*; read *dhandha)*, supremely stupid.[44]

The details of this passage reveal a fairly complex set of circumstances leading to our pig dealer's engagement with meditation,

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[44] COWELL AND NEIL 1987 [1886], p. 504.25–505.8–29: *sa prabhūtān sūkarāñ jānuṣu baddhvā nāvam āropya saṃprasthitaḥ / sā naus taiḥ parispandamānair bāḍitā / tatraivānayena vyasanam āpannaḥ / so 'pi saukariko 'tra srotenohyamānaḥ / tasyā nadyās tīre pañcapratyekabuddhaśatāni prativasanti / teṣām ekaḥ pratyekabuddhaḥ pānīyasyārthe nadīṃ gataḥ / tena sa dṛṣṭaḥ / sa saṃlakṣayati / kiṃ tāvad ayaṃ mṛtaḥ āhosvij jīvatīti / paśyati yāvaj jīvati / sa tena gajabhujasadṛśaṃ bāhum abhiprasāryoddhṛtya bālukāyāḥ sthalaṃ kṛtvā tatrāvamūrdhakaḥ sthāpitaḥ / tasya kāyāt pānīyaṃ niḥsṛtam / sa vyutthitaḥ / manuṣyapadāni paśyati / sa tena pādānusāreṇa gato yāvat paśyati pañcamātrāṇi pratyekabuddhaśatāni / sa teṣāṃ pattreṇa puṣpeṇa phalena dantakāṣṭhena copasthānaṃ kartum ārabdhaḥ / te tasya pātraśeṣam anuprayacchanti / tena bhuktam / atha te pratyekabuddhāḥ paryaṅkaṃ baddhvā dhyāyanti / tadā so 'py ekānte sthitvā paryaṅkaṃ baddhvā dhyāyati / sa tatrāsaṃjñikam utpādya asaṃjñisattveṣu deveṣūpapannaḥ // … yad anena mātsaryeṇa na kasyacic catuṣpadikā gāthā uddiṣṭā yac ca sūkarān praghātya asaṃjñisattvebhya ihopapannas tasya karmaṇo vipākena cūḍaḥ paramacūḍo dhanvaḥ paramadhanvaḥ saṃvṛttaḥ //*

circumstances that have very broad conceptual and social implications. For example, the fact that the subject of this story is a pig dealer, who does not participate in the most basic practices of Buddhist ethics, is emphasized as one major factor in the narrative, and would certainly have been significant for the Code-carrier monks *(vinaya-dhara)* who transmitted the *Mūlasarvāstivāda-vinaya*. Further, the context of the pig dealer's meditation among solitary buddhas is also significant; in it we may find echoes of a Mahāyānist denigration of solitary buddhahood. Finally, the specific type of meditation that the pig dealer practiced, the meditation of impercipience *(āsaṃjñikaṃ)*, adds a third significant point of detail to the narrative.[45] When we put these factors together, it becomes clear that Schopen misrepresents the story when he states that the tale's "only point seems to be to indicate that meditation makes you stupid." On the contrary, the point of the story is that certain types of meditation, in certain contexts, will lead to certain results, results which fit quite nicely with the basic doctrines of cause and effect found throughout the mainstream Buddhist literature.[46] This story is a critique of the practice of meditation in that it presents the dangers of the wrong type of meditation, meditation outside of the parameters generally condoned by the Buddhist tradition. At the same time, however, it presents Cūḍapanthaka's great spiritual power as an indirect result of such practices. The narrative thus

[45] On the state of impercipience, see Akbh II.41–42, pp. 68–69. Of particular importance is the notion that the meditative state of impercipience is not practiced by realized Buddhists, *ārya*-s (Akbh II.42, p. 69).

[46] There is an inclination to read the story as a simple critique of the meditation of impercipience, as this technique was considered to be out of the range of realized Buddhists. This is definitely one aspect of the narrative. As the text clearly states, one of the main reasons Cūḍapanthaka is born stupid is that he practiced this specific meditative state. At the same time, however, Cūḍapanthaka's great supernatural powers, which arise once he has overcome his stupidity, are also implicitly associated with his past practice of impercipience. (See COWELL AND NEIL 1987 [1886], p. 494.16–26 and p. 508.8–22. In these episodes, Cūḍapanthaka is described carrying out supernormal acts in precisely the same way as the solitary Buddha in the story above is described saving him [COWELL AND NEIL 1987 (1886), p. 505.15]: *gajabhujasadṛśaṃ bāhum abhiprasārya* … This phrase is found only a few other times in the *Divyāvadāna*, also in the context of supernormal activity. It is notable that a similar variant of this phrase in the *Avadānaśataka* [SPEYER 1906–1909], *gajabhujasadṛśaṃ suvarṇavarṇabāhum abhiprasārya* …, is used repeatedly to describe the Buddha himself.). This indicates that the story cannot be interpreted as a simple criticism of the meditative state of impercipience, since the state is also presented as having powerful positive karmic consequences. We thus see a perfect example of how complex and ambiguous references to specific meditation practices, and their narrative purpose, can be.

describes Cūḍapanthaka as the best of the Buddha's disciples with respect to skill in the transformation or devolution of the mind *(cetovivartakuśala)*.[47] His unique mental capacities—ostensibly partially the result of his past meditative practice of impercipience—allow him to bring others to awakening by teaching them just a single verse of the Dharma.[48] Cūḍapanthaka, therefore, is not the butt of a joke, as Schopen would have it, but an example of a spiritual master who, though born stupid, overcame the odds and surpassed even the most learned with his spiritual power.[49] If there is any single point to the story, it is perhaps the idea that the law of karma is very complex, and defies simple correspondences.

Most importantly, the specific reference to the meditative state of impercipience in this story indicates that its author(s) was in fact well versed in theories of meditation, and engaged such theories in constructing a plausible karmic framework for Cūḍapanthaka's prehistory. Yet Schopen adduces this story as evidence that the compilers/authors/redactors/transmitters of the *Mūlasarvāstivāda-vinaya* were either not interested in meditation, or disdainful of it. This example shows how the interests of modern western scholars can distort an understanding of the Buddhist tradition just as much as the earlier apologists that Schopen critiques.[50] When it comes to the topic of meditation, scholars often have no frame of reference for truly understanding the tradition.

Another similarly problematic approach to the study of Buddhist meditation is exemplified by the writings of Eli Franco in a recent volume of articles on the topic of *Yogic Perception, Meditation and Altered States of Consciousness* (2009). Referring to descriptions of supernatural powers found in relatively archaic strata of Indic texts, Franco writes:

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[47] COWELL AND NEIL 1987 [1886], p. 495.20–22. In the Pāli literature as well, Cūḷapanthaka is given this designation. See AN I 24 (B^{e}): *etadaggaṃ, bhikkhave, mama sāvakānaṃ bhikkhūnaṃ … cetovivaṭṭakusalānaṃ yadidaṃ Cūḷapanthako*. It seems quite likely that the authors/compilers/redactors of the Cūḍapanthaka story of the *Divyāvadāna* conceived a direct conceptual connection between the state of impercipience practiced by Cūḍapanthaka in his past life, and his skill in the transformation or devolution of the mind.

[48] COWELL AND NEIL 1987 [1886], pp. 494.16–495.8.

[49] COWELL AND NEIL 1987 [1886], pp. 506.1–509.5.

[50] The quotation cited above, from SCHOPEN 2004, is embedded in a general critique of scholars who have preceded him, and who have treated Buddhism as a tradition whose central focus is meditation.

> Such claims of extraordinary knowledge and supernatural bodily capacities were presumably not made, at least for the most part, by the persons to whom they are attributed, the Buddha, the Jina, or other accomplished yogis, but by their pious followers. They are primarily due, I assume, to the natural propensity to aggrandize one's teachers, and even more so, the mythical founder of one's tradition … One has to distinguish here between theory and practice: In theory, the Buddha, the Jina and many others, although certainly not all founders of traditions, gained their deep insights into the nature of reality while absorbed in meditation, but in practice we see that also in India metaphysical theories were conceived and developed—is this really surprising?—by philosophers philosophizing … For the traditional practicing yogis, such as the followers of the Buddha and the Jina, the question of gaining new knowledge through meditation usually does not arise, at least not theoretically. For them there is nothing new to discover in the course of their meditation; the objective of meditation is to gain deeper understanding of the truths handed down by tradition.[51]

The assumptions evident in this quotation reflect something of a dissociative engagement with the data of the Buddhist tradition as presented in Buddhist canonical texts and the material found in the more developed post-canonical sources dealing explicitly with descriptions of meditative practice. While it is quite possible that the founders of India's religions were silent on the topic of supernormal powers, it is equally likely that the claims of the texts do indeed reflect the ideas of these masters. To make conjectural assumptions about this, particularly when all available evidence suggests the contrary, is problematic. While we obviously cannot take all the texts and the representations therein at face value, the overwhelming presence in the extant textual record of descriptions of meditation and supernormal powers *in practice* suggests that a hermeneutic approach chalking up such descriptions to pious fictions or metaphysical theories does not do justice to the material.[52]

I have no easy solution to the question of how insights in meditation, supernormal powers, and metaphysical theories can be connected to the foundational teachings of Indian's great religious

[51] FRANCO 2009a, pp. 8–9.

[52] As Rupert Gethin (1992, pp. 11–12) points out, western attempts to construct a chronology of early Buddhist textual sources have almost always been attended by certain modernist assumptions about how the magical aspects of the tradition could not possibly be original. He also shows that such assumptions are not well supported by the sources themselves.

founders. However, the textual strata that Franco refers to suggest that these three aspects of spiritual life in early India were not considered distinct spheres of interest. Practice and theory are not as easily separated as scholars would presume. It is not surprising, however, that western scholars feel more comfortable with the idea that metaphysical theories are the result of philosophers philosophizing. This is, after all, precisely what most western scholars are doing when they attempt to engage and understand Buddhist texts. However, the practice/theory dichotomy finds no significant parallel within early Indian yogic traditions. In the early Buddhist context, "philosophizing" or discussing doctrine was considered one aspect of a comprehensive spiritual practice, composed of ethical cultivation, learning, and meditation.[53] Nonetheless, scholars who study the philosophical traditions tend to unduly prioritize the theoretical. Franco exemplifies this tendency when he writes of the purely theoretical origins of the doctrine of dependent origination *(pratītyasamutpāda)*, one of the central doctrines of the Buddhist tradition:

> Concerning the former [i.e. the doctrine of dependant origination], there is hardly any need to argue that it did not directly arise from meditation or spiritual practice … Schmithausen himself has contributed a fundamental study of this doctrine, where he argues that the list of twelve members as we know it today is the result of three different lists that were put together in the course of a development that is reflected in the heterogeneous materials of the Pāli canon (cf. Schmithausen 2000). In this case, I assume, Schmithausen himself would argue for systematizations of earlier lists and redactional motives, rather than spiritual practice, as decisive for the origin of the doctrine. As for the doctrine of rebirth as such that is reflected in most if not all these lists, it is pre-Buddhist in origin and is presupposed and taken for granted in the earliest strata of the Pāli canon. Thus, it too cannot have risen from meditation, at least not from Buddhist meditation.[54]

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[53] See, for example, MN 43 at MN I 294 (B[e]). My translation is adapted from BODHI AND ÑĀṆAMOLI 1995, p. 390: "Friend, right view is assisted by five factors when it has deliverance of mind for its fruit, deliverance of mind for its fruit and benefit, when it has deliverance by discernment for its fruit, deliverance by discernment for its fruit and benefit. Here, friend, right view is assisted by virtue, learning, discussion, calming, and insight." *("pañcahi kho, āvuso, aṅgehi anuggahitā sammādiṭṭhi cetovimuttiphalā ca hoti cetovimuttiphalānisaṃsā ca, paññāvimuttiphalā ca hoti paññāvimuttiphalānisaṃsā ca. idh' āvuso, sammādiṭṭhi sīlānuggahitā ca hoti, sutānuggahitā ca hoti, sākacchānuggahitā ca hoti, samathānuggahitā ca hoti, vipassanānuggahitā ca hoti …" ti.)*

[54] FRANCO 2009b, p. 100.

This passage reveals numerous methodological problems, but it suffices to point out the simple interpretive fallacy found in the assumptions that 1. systematization and redaction are spheres of activity necessarily distinct from spiritual practice, and 2. there is such a thing as a single decisive motive for the origin of any doctrine. As the basic doctrine of *pratītyasamutpāda* itself indicates, no event arises based on a single cause. Rather, the world of human experience arises due to a collocation of psychophysical causes and conditions. Similarly, redactional motives might be rooted in conceptions of the world gleaned through traditional spiritual practice, while new spiritual practices might be justified through recourse to redaction.[55] Likewise, redaction itself was likely understood as a form of spiritual practice in its own right, a practical meditation of constructing the theoretical.[56] I see no good reason to believe, against the vast litany of evidence in the early textual sources, that spiritual practice generally, and meditative experience more specifically, was not one decisive factor in the formation of the classical doctrine of *pratītyasamutpāda*.

Franco's work, then, is an example of the way in which modern scholarly interests contribute to certain problematic methodological choices. Much of Western scholarship on Buddhism tends to favor or prioritize the scholastic, the philosophical or the textual, ignoring the deep interconnected historical relationships between philosophy, ethical practices, recitation, learning, cosmology, and traditions of meditation in Buddhism. By contrast, I try in my treatment of the *Saddharmasmṛtyupasthānasūtra* to deal with practice, theory, and ideology as indelibly linked, forming a coherent and holistic framework represented through a distinct literary form.

I dwell on these issues at length because the approaches referenced here, and others similar to them, have had a strong impact on the field of Buddhist Studies, and on a number of recent trends in the study of Buddhism more broadly. While I agree that it is useful to emphasize that meditation practice was only one aspect of the spiritual and social lives of Indian Buddhists, one should not

[55] Richard Gombrich (1997) similarly argues that focusing on single determinative motives is a problematic historical approach to the history of Buddhist thought.

[56] We also cannot preclude the possibility that the Buddha himself was an active agent in the early "redaction" process, developing new modes of teaching for various different types of disciples. We will never be able to know how much of what comes to us today might be directly attributed to the Buddha. However, a hermeneutic of utter suspicion is about as productive as one that posits all the teachings in the canonical sources as the direct word of the Buddha.

overstate the extent to which such practice was marginalized within the larger field of Indian Buddhist culture, or efface the possibility of meditative experiences as a formative aspect of the socio-religious lives of Buddhist practitioners and the philosophical traditions that developed over the centuries. Literary sources of all genres—Sūtra, Vinaya, Abhidharma, *śāstra* and apocrypha—as well as art historical and archaeological sources, attest to the perennial importance of the practice, theory, and representation of meditation for Indian Buddhists. The present study attempts to walk a meditative middle path, looking closely and seriously at a specific tradition of contemplative cultivation, but also contextualizing that tradition within a complex matrix of literary, social, doctrinal, ideological and discursive spheres of interest.

A FEW COMMENTS ON METHOD

With the foundation of many excellent scholarly studies of Indian texts, philosophical trends, material and ritual cultures, and meditation traditions over the past 125 years, we are in a privileged position to study the *Saddhsu*. We have a host of sources to draw on, and a good historical framework within which to situate the tradition evidenced in the text. At the same time, the obscurities of the *Saddhsu*, and the fact that it comes down in a single manuscript, present the scholar with various difficulties. While the text draws on a common core of received Buddhist categories and conceptions, its idiosyncratic historical and scholastic position, as well as its unique literary format, create difficulties of interpretation. Further, the Sanskrit manuscript of the *Saddhsu*, which serves as the central source for this study, is the outcome of a long and protracted transmission history. It is full of textual problems and, even with corrective recourse to its Tibetan and Chinese translations, sometimes evidences serious problems of coherency. Because of these fundamental issues of simply understanding and reconstructing both medium and message, the primary methodological tool used in this study is textual and text-historical criticism. I establish the text of the second chapter of the *Saddhsu*, outline a literary-historical context within which the larger text was produced, and attempt to elicit historical religious data from its presentation of meditative practice.

I approach the textual world of the *Saddhsu* comparatively, as an intertextual and orthopractical matrix with a number of histo-

rically emergent conceptual properties. I read it both within and against the literature of the early mainstream Buddhist canonical and scholastic traditions, focusing primarily on the literary construction of the text, its reliance on earlier textual models, and the inseparability of its doctrinal and contemplative program from its literary structure. A close reading of the text, therefore, involves a particular sensitivity to its idiosyncratic literary format. My method is thus not simply text-critical, but also engages with the text's unique form of literariness, and the way that that form serves to construct a mode of rhetoric, a contemplative outlook, and ultimately a doctrine of power.

This means that to truly understand the practices prescribed in the *Saddhsu,* we have to take seriously the question of its textual genre. More broadly speaking, the role of textuality—the specific ways that texts are constructed—must become a central hermeneutic device in approaching historical representations of Buddhist meditation, which mainly come to us through specific textual traditions. Touching tangentially on this issue, Florin Deleanu writes about the literary classification of texts devoted to meditation:

> From a thematic point of view, the *Śrāvakabhūmi* belongs to the substantial corpus of texts dedicated to the presentation and elucidation of the spiritual cultivation. As far as I know, there is no traditional Indian term denoting this genre. The Chinese Buddhists, faced with an impressive number of such translations (as well as apocrypha), coined terms like *chan jing* 禪經 'meditation scripture', *chan dian* 禪典 'meditation writ', or *chan yao* 禪要 'meditation summary'(see DELEANU 1992, 43). This large output is quite natural for a religion in which meditation was a paramount spiritual concern.[57]

Deleanu's comments highlight the fact that Indian Buddhists never grouped meditation texts into a single genre. Representations of the stages of meditation can be found in texts from all genres, be it early lyric poetry, didactic *sūtra* literature, formal poetics, *śāstra*-s, debate texts, or the more developed literary *sūtra* literature of the Mahāyāna and mainstream Buddhist traditions. Scholars have often discussed such literature under the general heading of *mārga* texts, texts dealing with the *path* of meditation. I would argue, however, that this categorization obscures the variety of types of textual production and the diverse contexts in which such literature was

[57] DELEANU 2006, p. 157.

fashioned.[58] What is more, such a category also cloaks the divergent aims and approaches of the authors and redactors who produced texts about meditation. A good example of this problem can be found in the work of Robert Sharf. Sharf groups texts such as the *Visuddhimagga*, the *Bodhisattvabhūmi,* the *Bhāvanākrama*, the *Lam rim chen mo*, and the *Abhisamayālaṅkāra* into a single genre category of "*mārga* treatises."[59] On one level, it is useful to point out that such texts all participate in what might be called the śāstric calenture, a predilection for the production of philosophical treatises that took hold among Buddhists in India beginning in the early centuries of the Common Era and never let up until the tradition's demise. On the other hand, such a categorization obscures the striking differences between these texts, the possible distinct contexts in which they were produced, and the varied unique relationships to meditative experience each text reveals.

Robert Buswell has touched on this issue in a brief comparison of the alternative analyses of meditative cultivation presented in two prominent scholastic treatises, the **Abhidharmamahāvibhāṣāśāstra* and the *Visuddhimagga*.[60] He points out how these two massive texts embody two divergent hermeneutic perspectives on spiritual cultivation, the former retrospective and hyper-scholastic and the latter developmental and practical. Although he does not say so explicitly, Buswell is drawing attention to the way in which textual representations of spiritual practice, and the socio-literary or scholastic contexts in which they are produced, actually condition the soteriological and practical programs that emerge relationally through them. This means that any assessment of a given historical program of meditative practice must be accompanied by close attention to the literary, philosophical or scholastic format in which representations of that program are presented.[61] What also follows from such an understanding is that totalizing genre categories such as that of

[58] For an attempt to deal with the question of the dynamic nature of *mārga*, see BUSWELL AND GIMELLO 1992. Unfortunately, nowhere in this volume do we find an explicit discussion of how different kinds of Indian literary forms might impact representations of meditative practice. An interesting attempt to think about the literary forms of early canonical Buddhist literature was made by MANNÉ 1990. She attempted to look at different formulas in the canonical literature and the way that such formulas were constructed for different didactic purposes.

[59] SHARF 1995b, p. 236.

[60] BUSWELL 1997, p. 607–609.

[61] I think this may be the point that SHARF (1995b) ultimately intended to make. It is unfortunate that this basic and very useful idea gets somewhat obscured by the polemical framing of the broader article.

"*mārga* treatise" end up causing more problems than they solve, often blotting out important distinctions that allow for a more nuanced historical understanding of how such texts negotiate their individual soteriological or scholastic projects. Following on this basic insight into the sources available for the study of the early history of Buddhist meditation traditions, I read and interpret the *Saddhsu* employing the specific modes of textuality and textual practice found in it as constitutive aspects of my hermeneutic approach. While I treat the text historically in connection with a number of other *yogācārabhūmi* texts, texts presenting the practices and meditative progressions of meditation practitioners *(yogācāra*), I do not emphasize these connections at the expense of the details of the individual traditions, which must be treated closely and carefully on their own terms. In approaching the *Saddhsu*, I begin with the basic methodological assumption that the text's own structure and ideological positioning must be a primary defining principle in conditioning how one reads it.

So, while the *Saddhsu* is a "*mārga* text" of sorts in that it presents a Buddhist path of meditative practice, it truly stands on its own, unique in its literary eclecticism, narrative format, and doctrinal outlook. I therefore read the text and present my interpretations of it following on cues presented by the text itself, building my methodological engagement with the text through a dialogical engagement with its own narrative framework and doing my best to leave aside totalizing scholastic categories that do not allow the specifics of the textual tradition to speak for themselves.[62] This is the great strength of text-historical criticism, which serves as the fundamental methodological tool employed in the present study. With recourse to this method, I expose the contours of the *Saddhsu*, and show how it expresses a unique culture of meditative practice, an exceptional soteriology, and an expansive vision of individual spiritual power during a relatively obscure period of Buddhist history.

OUTLINE OF THE BOOK

This book consists of three parts divided into two volumes. Volume I comprises a historical study of the *Saddhsu* (Part I) and a critical

[62] My analysis of the soteriology of the *Saddhsu* in the third chapter of Part I might be viewed as something of a departure from this methodology, as I (perhaps foolhardily) impose the totalizing category of "Mahāyāna Buddhism" on my reading of the text.

edition and translation of its second chapter (Part II). Volume II comprises a series of eight supporting appendices (Part III).

Part I consists of four chapters. In the first chapter, I present a general overview of the *Saddhsu* as a text, including a discussion of its date, the sources employed for its study, and a summary of its contents. This chapter provides background information for the more detailed engagement with the second chapter of the text that follows in later chapters.

In the second chapter, I explore the details of the fundamental meditative practice outlined in the second chapter of the *Saddhsu*, arguing that the details found in the text's descriptions of meditative experience allow scholars new insight into the dynamic processes and construction of Buddhist practice traditions. In particular, I show that the division between mystical states, cognitive insights and philosophical developments may never have been as cut and dried as scholars have assumed. I demonstrate how the text was constructed on the basis of canonical precedents, and trace the numerous allusions and metaphors in it, displaying their indebtedness to early canonical formulas.

In the third chapter, I argue that the soteriology of the *Saddhsu* is best understood as tacitly underwriting a Mahāyāna agenda. While the text as we have it was formalized between the first and fourth centuries CE—when the Mahāyāna had been around in incipient form for several centuries—it preserves within it a treatment of stages of meditative practice that can be read as transitional between an earlier framework of primitive Buddhist practice and a fully developed notion of Mahāyāna practice as exemplified by later stage *(bhūmi)* texts. I also show how the primary model of spiritual cultivation presented in the text underwrites an agenda of universal spiritual sovereignty and individual mastery.

In the fourth chapter, I place the *Saddhsu*, and the imagined community of scholar-practitioners who transmitted it, in historical context, situating them within the broader history of the Buddhist tradition in India. I argue that the text can be read in dialogue with a number of dominant Buddhist discourses of the first half of the first millennium CE, and that it presents clear evidence of the centrality of meditative practice in the dialogical development of its philosophical agenda. I show how the category of the meditation practitioner *(yogācāra)* was a constitutive element in the text's construction, and that the central thrust of its contemplative program is geared towards a practitioner becoming a *yogācāra*, a master

practitioner whose spiritual presence can be interpreted as an instantiation of the power of the Buddha in the world. I show how such conceptions of spiritual power are linked to a unique notion of meditative discernment *(prajñā)*, one that posits knowledge of karma as a central aspect of such discernment. Finally, I demonstrate how the text evidences a philosophical preoccupation with conceptions of the mind that can be read as an incipient instantiation of a fully developed Yogācāra-vijñānavāda metaphysics—a metaphysics that posits all phenomenal and ontological distinctions as governed and produced by mental activity.

In Part II, I offer a critical edition and annotated translation of the second chapter of the *Saddhsu* as found in the newly discovered Sanskrit manuscript. I establish the Sanskrit text with recourse to all three extant versions of the text—the Sanskrit manuscript, a Tibetan translation and a Chinese translation—and present along with it philological commentary and *testimonia*. This is the first time the text has been edited or translated into English, and the data gleaned from this section of the text serves as the foundational core of the study in Part I.

Part III (Volume II) contains eight appendices. Appendix 1 is a diplomatic transcription of a copy of the manuscript of the second chapter of the *Saddhsu*. This is to be employed in conjunction with Part II of the book, by those who would like to more clearly understand the state of the original manuscript. Appendix 2 is a critical edition of the Tibetan translation of the second chapter of the *Saddhsu*. This edition is based on nine witnesses to the Tibetan Buddhist canon *(bka' 'gyur)*, accounting for the Tshal pa, Them spangs ma, and Mustang transmissions, as well as one archaic manuscript witness from the independent proto-canonical Gondhla collection. This appendix is important because, due to the status of the text within the Tibetan tradition, the transmission of the *Saddhsu* in Tibetan translation is rather poor. A critical edition of the second chapter, structured and punctuated to conform with the Sanskrit edition, makes the text accessible to a much wider audience. In Appendix 3, I present the Chinese translation of the second chapter of the *Saddhsu*, based on the Taishō edition. I repunctuate the text, and structure it in conformity with the Sanskrit edition. Additionally, I offer a number of new readings based on Taishō variants. Appendix 4 is a synoptic presentation of three versions of the **Ṣaḍdhātuvibhaṅgasūtra*—transmitted in Pāli, Chinese, and Tibetan respectively—in connection with selected sections of the *Saddhsu*. This appendix clearly exhibits the way in which the

Saddhsu was constructed based on canonical precedents. It also makes the Tibetan translation of the **Ṣaḍdhātuvibhaṅgasūtra* more accessible to readers. Appendices 5, 6, and 7 are critical editions, diplomatic editions, and translations of sections of the sixth chapter of the *Saddhsu* dealing with a series of numbered lists of *dharmas*, relevant to middle period Buddhist psychology and meditation practice. Appendix 7 is of particular importance, as it contains a passage dealing with the process of attaining the first stage of Buddhist realization, the stage of stream-entry. This passage displays how a traditional soteriological model from the standard Buddhist Abhidharmic tradition can be found embedded within the more radical soteriological model presented in the broader structure of the *Saddhsu*. Appendix 8 is a critical and diplomatic edition of a passage—representing an interpolated alternate version of a short section of the second chapter of the *Saddhsu*—found on one side of a single folio (Ms 96) of the *Saddhsu* manuscript. A reading of this short section of the text, and a comparison with its parallel in the second chapter, allows readers a glimpse into the subtle dynamism of the text's transmission tradition.[63]

[63] On this issue, see Chapter 1, pp. 42–43.